

MESSAGE FROM THE ACTING DIRECTOR

What Does the Waiver Mean to Us?

The approval of the Title IV-E Waiver Demonstration Project Waiver marks a historic time for our department and a chance for us to think differently about the work we do.

By providing flexible funding to further develop proactive up-front preventative services for children and families, the waiver gives us a chance to be creative with ideas, build on the important work we are already doing, and ultimately create a national model for best practices in social work.

Most importantly, the waiver will provide the funding for additional intensive services to support the timely reunification or an alternative permanency plan for children currently in foster care.

As you know, in the past we have been limited by strict federal funding guidelines to provide services to children based on funding eligibility, which oftentimes is not in line with the needs of children and families. As a result, we have relied too heavily on the removal of children from the home, which has been the primary use of IV-E assistance funds.

Now, under the waiver, we are able to use the IV-E funds whether or not the child is removed from the home. In addition, the waiver will allow for flexibility to use the funds to provide direct services not currently funded by IV-E based on each family's individual needs to ensure that children remain safely in their family of origin, are reunified sooner, or an alternative permanency plan is achieved timely. This could include vital services such as mental health treatment, drug counseling and domestic violence services.

For two years, hard-working DCFS staff has been preparing for approval of the waiver and implementation of the funding by gathering input about practices from social workers on the line and discussing the best ways to use the services in the community.

Our formal planning process is underway. Once we have a local plan approved by the State, the State's implementation plan will be submitted to the federal government.

I look to the regional offices to provide ideas for how best to use this funding and am pleased that so many office representatives attended the waiver training in June.

This gives us all a chance to think creatively to support the goals we have already set: increased permanency, increased safety and a reduced reliance on out-of-home care. Our success will be determined on how well we achieve our outcomes that support children and families. ■

Joan Smith,
Acting Director

California Granted Federal IV-E Waiver

Change in Funding Will Provide More Preventative Services for Families in Need

In March, the federal government approved a Title IV-E Waiver Demonstration Project request submitted by the California Department of Social Services in partnership with the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).

The waiver will provide between \$350 and \$400 million per year for five years in flexible funding for Los Angeles County to further develop proactive up-front preventative services for children and families to prevent children from entering the foster care system. The waiver also provides the funding for additional intensive services to support the timely reunification or an alternative permanency plan for children currently in foster care.

Traditionally, Los Angeles County has been limited by strict federal funding guidelines to provide services to children based on funding eligibility, which oftentimes is not in line with the needs of children and families. In the past, DCFS has relied primarily on the removal of children from the home, which has been the primary use of IV-E assistance funds.

Now, under the waiver, DCFS will be able use the IV-E funds whether or not the child is removed from the home. In addition, the waiver will allow for flexibility to use the funds to provide direct services not currently funded by IV-E based on each family's individual needs to ensure that children remain safely in their family of origin, are reunified sooner, or an alternative permanency plan is achieved timely.

The Title IV-E funding is expected to result in a shift in thinking and practices away from removal as always the safest and best alternative for children. It is also a historical moment for child welfare in Los Angeles County.

"This is the largest IV-E waiver that's ever been granted," said DCFS Acting Director Joan Smith. "L.A. County Mayor Michael Antonovich was instrumental in working with lawmakers in Sacramento and Washington D.C. to finalize the waiver, personally making several last-minute phone calls to legislators to make sure that it was granted."

For several months, DCFS staff has been preparing for approval of the waiver and implementation of the funding by gathering input about practices from social workers on the line and discussing the best ways to use the services in the community. A series of community meetings were also held in the region to get stake-holder input on areas of focus.

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DCFS Success Stories

As a regular part of "DCFS News," we recognize the successes of the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and its community partners. These success stories are diverse and offer an opportunity for staff and community partners to celebrate accomplishments and share the good work they are doing. To submit story ideas for this section, please e-mail Stuart Riskin of the DCFS Office of Public Affairs at riskis@dcfs.co.la.ca.us.

In this edition of "DCFS News" Success Stories we highlight the youth honored during the 2006 Los Angeles Foster Care Awareness Campaign held in May. These youth exemplify some of the best of our foster care system – whether through working for systemic reform, or educating other youth.

Christopher Mallory



Former foster youth Christopher Mallory entered foster care at the age of 9 and remained in foster care and group homes until he emancipated when he was 18.

His parents could not control their drug addiction any longer. During those years, Christopher attended several different elementary

and high schools and had only limited contact with his parents and his older sister, also placed in the foster care system, whose whereabouts were often unknown to him.

Although Christopher faced stressful psychological issues on his own, he managed to successfully graduate with honors from high school. He was recognized as Student of the Year at one of his many high schools.

Christopher now seeks to support and educate other foster youth by serving as a peer counselor in the ESTEP (Early Start to Emancipation Preparation) program at Long Beach City College. Christopher is determined to beat the odds and succeed as an elevator repair mechanic. And he has looked beyond simply his own economic well-being – financially assisting his sister and playing an important part in the upbringing of his niece and nephew. ■

Patrice Washington



“What you have been through in the past can shape your future. Kids need someone to fight for them,” observes Patrice Washington.

As a result of her unwavering determination, Patrice will soon be a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley.

Patrice entered foster care at age 6. Separated from her

five brothers and sisters, she acknowledges she felt lost for many years. Fortunately, one of her high school teachers convinced her that, despite her average start in high school, college was an option.

With encouragement, Patrice worked hard to turn her grades around. She graduated from Compton High School with a 3.7 grade point average and was awarded a scholarship from United Friends of the Children because of her focus on academic achievement, her ability to overcome obstacles and her drive to succeed.

While at Berkeley, Patrice spent her summers working as a legal intern, first for a judge in the Los Angeles County Superior Court and next at The Alliance for Children’s Rights. Patrice graduated with a bachelor’s degree in Legal Studies and plans to attend law school. ■

“What you have been through in the past can shape your future. Kids need someone to fight for them.”
– Patrice Washington, former foster youth

Federal IV-E Waiver

Continued from Page 1

In June, hundreds of DCFS managers gathered at USC for a day-long seminar about the waiver.

“We have to figure out what we really want to spend the money on,” said Smith. Programs not served by the waiver include training and the Independent Living Program services.

Offices will submit their plans about programs they feel would be best served. The plans will be included in an implementation plan drafted this fall and submitted to the state in final form. Implementation is expected to begin in January.

The State will contract with a third party to conduct an evaluation of the waiver project. The evaluation will consist of three parts: a process evaluation, an outcome evaluation, and a cost analysis. ■

IV-E Waiver Target Outcomes

Safety

- Reduce rate of abuse in foster care and relative care
- Reduce substantiated maltreatment

Permanency

- Decrease timelines to permanency: reunification, adoption and legal guardianship
- Decrease re-entry into placement
- Decrease the number of children/youth in long-term foster care and decrease the time children/youth are in long-term foster care

Reduced Reliance on Out-of-Home Care

- Reduce the number of children/youth in out-of-home care
- Reduce the number of children/youth in group care
- Increase the percentage of family maintenance cases relative to the total number of cases

Medical Hubs Now Open

It's a common scenario for many Children's Social Workers (CSWs): You are removing children from a filthy, drug-filled home and need an appropriate placement. The children are dirty, hungry and frightened. You also suspect they have been physically or sexually abused and are dealing with severe medical and mental illness. Bottom line, they need an assessment quickly. But where do you take them?

Now, all newly detained children can be taken to the new Medical Hubs located throughout Los Angeles County for their initial medical exam. The Medical Hub partnership between the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Department of Health Services (DHS) has expanded to provide a medical resource for DCFS youth, better serve their multiple health needs, and provide children with a standard level of care.

All children placed under the supervision of DCFS must have an initial medical exam. High-risk children and children zero to three years of age must be examined within the first 72 hours of their initial placement. All other children are to have their Initial Medical Examination within the first 30 days of their initial placement.

Hub locations currently in operation include County USC Medical Center, the High Desert Health System, Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, Olive View-UCLA Medical Center, King/Drew Medical Center and Children's Hospital Los Angeles. All are conducting forensic assessments on an as-needed basis. Some centers are also doing initial physicals.

The exams completed at Medical Hubs are comprehensive and include a mental health screening which can assist the CSW in making case decisions. The Medical Hubs will enable a CSW to obtain medical exam results for their clients in a more timely manner with results being forwarded directly to the worker. These results include establishing appropriate case plans with the Multi-disciplinary Assessment Team and the Team Decision-Making processes.

Exams include age-appropriate mental health screenings and forensic examinations if needed. Forensic exams are physical exams to detect and treat child abuse injuries and neglect. A forensic exam is not required for all DCFS children, but primarily completed when there are allegations of physical or sexual abuse. A forensic exam is generally requested immediately and should take place within 72 hours.

Each Medical Hub will complete a mental health screening through use of the California Institute of Mental Health Screening Tool. This tool is used to identify the need for a more comprehensive mental health assessment. Some of the Medical Hubs are connected to a Department of Mental Health provider which allows them to complete a more comprehensive assessment in a timely manner when the results of the screening tool identify a child who is in crisis.

Currently, the Violence Intervention Program (VIP) at the Los Angeles County USC Medical Center is the only HUB operation running on a 24/7 basis. The other HUBs are targeted to be fully operational during summer 2006. At that time, they will be performing the full array of assessments including initial and forensic exams, and mental health screenings. At this time, it is still being assessed whether round-the-clock services at other Medical Hubs will be necessary.

Use of the hubs is increasing as staff is learning that this is a valuable and needed resource, said DCFS Medical Director Dr. Charles Sophy. An average of 15 to 20 children are being seen per month based on referrals made by CSWs and Public Health Nurses. There are some locations that have a waiting list and prioritizing criteria are being compiled to shorten the waiting times. ■



SPA SPOTS

Child welfare delegation travels to Israel

In every issue, "DCFS News" provides information about what's happening in the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services' (DCFS) Service Planning Areas (SPAs). If you have SPA news to report, please submit your ideas to Stuart Riskin of the DCFS Public Affairs Office at riskis@dcfs.co.la.ca.us.

Mobile Worker Program Puts Staff in the Field

Instead of being tied to a particular workstation at a County facility, the Mobile Worker Program will now allow authorized employees to work from alternative work locations including home offices, office space at hospitals, school sites, community-based agencies, police stations and "hoteling" spaces at DCFS facilities.

Hoteling spaces are reserved areas within DCFS offices designed to allow mobile workers to tap into the department's computer system on a daily basis allowing them to enter information into CWS/CMS, prepare reports and perform other duties that require access to the network computer system.

Some of the benefits of implementing the program include increased efficiency/productivity, better time management, improved delivery of services to clients, increased employee satisfaction and cost savings on office space.

The pilot program was launched with about 30 workers in the Compton, Lancaster and Glendora offices. Remaining DCFS offices will roll out their programs during the summer.

For now, Children's Social Worker has been designated as the job classification for the pilot since their work requires them to spend several hours per day in the field visiting clients. If the pilot is successful, other groups of employees with similar job duties may be identified to participate in the on-going program.

For more information, call DCFS Human Resources at (213) 351-5850. ■

Permanency Options Conference Results in Connections for Kids

The Compton office staff, the Compton Unified School District, Southwest College and other community partners worked together to hold the first Permanency Options Conference last spring.

Invitees included relative caregivers who were at the termination of parental rights hearing and had not made a decision regarding permanency for the youth in their care. Caregivers were provided music, food, information and a comic skit about permanency options along with a compelling youth panel expressing their reasons why they needed a permanent family to call their own.

The conference proved to be effective. Out of the 23 relative

caregivers who attended, nine made a commitment to adoption or take legal guardianship for their children. In addition, eight caregivers requested additional information on issues such as co-adoption, to help them make a decision in the near future. Additionally, six youth were signed up for the Compton office's Diplomat's Teen Club. ■

Delegation Travels to Israel to View Child Welfare System

Last spring, DCFS staff including Children's Services Administrator III Marilynne Garrison and Torrance Regional Administrator Harvey Kawasaki joined a delegation brought together by The Jewish Federation and Jewish Family Service for a trip to Israel through the Federation's Tel Aviv/Los Angeles Partnership. The delegation traveled throughout Israel and the Municipality of Tel Aviv to view the country's child and family welfare system.

They visited an early childhood development center, a shelter for lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual and questioning youth, a daycare facility and a vocational high school for homeless youth. They also spoke with many social workers and learned about many interesting similarities and differences between child welfare in Israel and the United States.

In Israel, there is a strong partnership between child welfare and organizations in the community, they use a whole approach to helping the entire family unit and social workers are held in very high esteem. In addition, everyone in the community is considered a mandated reporter and the role of volunteerism is strong. Social workers in Israel advocate for the children in court as there are no children's attorneys or County Counsel roles.

One of the most interesting similarities to Los Angeles County, is that Israel is using the Point of Engagement concept to help keep families together.

The delegation is now looking at raising funds to bring child welfare staff from Tel Aviv to Los Angeles for a large conference. ■

Positions Added to Support Goals

In April, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved DCFS' proposal to add more than 400 part and full-time positions to support the department's three key outcomes and five strategies that support these outcomes.

The new positions range from clerical to social work to



Jan Springer



"Feel Like a Princess Day" participants

administrative positions for Team Decision-Making, the Concurrent Planning Redesign, Emergency Response, Homeless Outreach, Kinship Support and Mentoring. They include dozens of new Supervising Children's Social Workers, more than 100 new Children's Social Workers (CSW) and 55 CSWs assigned solely to Emergency Response. Positions will also be added to Human Resources to aid in the hiring of these new positions. In addition, three existing positions will be redirected to the department's Mentoring Unit.

Specifically, the new positions are aimed at improving child safety, reducing the placement of children in foster care and reducing the time children spend in care through family reunification, adoption or legal guardianship.

With the increase, the department will have sufficient staff to conduct Team Decision-Making before every placement decision, initiate the roll-out of the Concurrent Planning Redesign County-wide, expand the Permanency Partners Program, make better decisions about child safety up front, improve the support of relative caregivers and provide more mentoring resources for youth. ■

DCFS Volunteer of the Year Finds Value in Mentoring

Jan Springer has been named the 2006 Los Angeles County Volunteer of the Year.

"Nothing is impossible when it comes to Jan's passion for foster youth and especially for her mentee, Monique. She is a driving force in the development of DCFS Torrance Office's model mentor program for foster teens. Her contributions are many and her commitment is unequalled," explained DCFS retiree and Mentorship Group member Stacey Saville.

Springer has assisted the DCFS SPA 8 office in its effort to form the South Bay Community Mentor Model. After many hours of fun, frustration, time and money, the team's efforts are beginning to pay off. In the year-and-a-half that Springer has been volunteering on the committee, her contributions have included assistance with web site development and a business plan, hiring of a grant writer, initial set up for non-profit status, mentor recruitment, community sponsorships, gifting and establishing partnerships with existing local mentor programs.

She also participates on the South Bay Community Partnership Council and co-chairs its mentor sub-committee, as well as mentoring three foster youth over the last three years in her spare time. ■

Youth Treated Like Princesses for the Day

The DCFS Pasadena and North Hollywood offices along with the Adopt a Child Abuse Caseworker (ACAC) program sponsored their annual "Feel Like a Princess Day" and "Prom Prep 101" events in April.

The events are two of the ACAC's many projects and focus on boosting the self-esteem of 16- to 18-year-old women in foster care with a fun afternoon of dressing up in beautiful formalwear. They also have their hair and make-up professionally done and the day is memorialized in pictures.

Besides making the youth feel good, the event also stocks their closets in preparation of their upcoming proms and dances. The ACAC Program and local Community Partners donate brand new and slightly worn gowns.

All supplies for the events were donated by the Pasadena DCFS staff, the Wells Fargo Foothill branch, Jessica McClintock, Victoria Principal skincare and Westmore Cosmetology School. Volunteers created hair and make-up and a professional photographer took their special portrait. ■

Managers Participate in Conference on Evidence-Based Practice

An impressive number of representatives from Los Angeles, including DCFS, attended the "Evidence-Based Practice: A University/Agency Partnership for California" conference held in February at the University of Southern California. Close to 30 DCFS managers attended this conference sponsored by the California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC) and the Child & Family Policy Institute of California (CFPIC).

To kick off the conference, Dr. David Sanders, former DCFS Director, and Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey, Research Director of the newly formed Children and Families Research Consortium (CFRC), jointly presented the challenges as well as opportunities for developing and sustaining a partnership of mutual benefit to DCFS and local universities.

Other invited speakers shared data resources for child welfare, including the California Child Welfare Clearinghouse for Evidence-Based Practice, National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect, and Performance Indicators Project under the Center for Social Services Research at the University of California, Berkeley.

As part of this conference, DCFS managers and CFRC staff, including Dr. Walter Furman, Dr. Jane Yoo, and Stephanie Carter-Williams met with faculty representatives from the five universities of the Inter-University Consortium (IUC) including the University of Southern California, University of California Los Angeles, California State University Long Beach, California State University Los Angeles and California State University Northridge.

Mitch Mason, DCFS Chief of Governmental Relations, McCroskey, and Bill Donnelly (IUC Director) introduced the CFRC and distributed a list of faculty interests in child welfare. This list, which reflects enormous interest in child welfare practice and research among local researchers, is available at the CFRC website: <http://cfrc.spa.ucla>. ■

Permanency Update:

Offices Meet with Success while Moving Forward with Permanency Efforts

Answering a call to action last year to improve permanency for foster children, the DCFS regional offices stepped up to the plate, got down to work and came up with office permanency plans that are already yielding success.

Many offices have decided to focus on older youth who have been in the system for years, languished in foster care and were previously considered “hard-to-place.”

The department’s current increased permanency efforts started last year after the “Achieving Permanency Workgroup” developed long- and short-term plans and strategies to increase the percentage of foster youth who exit the system with a legally permanent family and strong ties to one or more nurturing adults. The office permanency plans then grew out of that workgroup.

All of the offices continue their hard work in finding permanency for children and youth, and the following updates are just a sample of the work being done so far.

Santa Clarita Office

The DCFS Santa Clarita Office staff is training for Point of Engagement and working on implementation of the Concurrent Plan Redesign. Now they’re trying to engage community groups to assist them with permanency efforts, said Regional Administrator Paul Freedlund.

The Santa Clarita Office decided to focus permanency efforts on youth who are 12 years and older and in long-term foster care.

Bonnie Scales, a retired Children’s Social Worker brought back to work as part of the Permanency Partners Program (P3), was charged with leading a specific strategy for the office.

Scales has had some success. Recently, she worked with two brothers, ages 16 and 17, who had been in the system since infancy. She found out about their relatives and started making calls.

“When I first called his aunt, she hung up on me,” said Scales. Eventually, though, the aunt came around and the 16-year-old is now living with her. The 17-year-old, who has special mental needs, will go live with his grandmother.

“We wanted to show the workers that we could move these cases forward,” she said.

West Los Angeles Office

West Los Angeles Office Assistant Regional Administrator Richard Miyake said that the office has reviewed the cases of 454 youth who have been in out-of-home care for two or more years.

When analyzing the cases, staff found that 56 percent of these children have either achieved permanency or will shortly. Most of them are living with extended family members who serve as their legal guardians or caregivers. A significant number are also 17 years old and above. Older children, said Miyake, were more likely to object to guardianship or adoption by their relative caregivers.

Miyake said relatives also show some resistance to legal permanency. The reasons they are given most often include that the youth have behavioral issues, the youth will emancipate in a year or two anyway, the hope that the family will get it together and the worry about access to services. Staff is now working to address these

concerns with caregivers, he said.

Part of the West Los Angeles plan includes regional social workers teaming with Adoption workers to meet with caregivers and discuss the legal permanency needs of the children. The staff also uses Family Group Decision-Making to work out a plan if an acceptable permanency plan cannot be achieved. All children in group homes are referred to the Permanency Partners Program (P3) when appropriate family members or significant adults cannot be found.

Specialized Programs

“Medical Placement children are a challenge for permanency, but we have been successful – even to our surprise,” said Charlene Robinson, Assistant Regional Administrator. “Our workers have changed their discussion with caregivers about permanency.”

Robinson said staff recently found a match for a 3-year-old medically-fragile child through a department-sponsored Adoption Fair. “She has chronic lung disease, mental delays and is fed through a tube,” explained Robinson. “No family members could care for her.”

The child was referred to the Placement and Recruitment Unit and matched with a mother. “She is an enthusiastic caregiver that wants to make a difference,” said Robinson.

Compton Office

The Compton Office Emergency Response detentions have reduced by approximately 40 percent and the number of voluntary cases has increased by approximately 50 percent.

From September 2005 to March 2006, the number of Family Maintenance cases increased by 37 percent. The office has 69 percent more cases in voluntary Family Maintenance than court-appointed family maintenance.

In addition, the number of family reunifications within 12 months has increased to 65 percent and rising, noted Regional Administrator Eric Marts. “We are approaching the federal standard of 76 percent.”

“In the last 10 months, our collaboration with Adoptions has shown an increase in approved home studies, adoptive placements, and completed adoptions. Our office is averaging approximately eight adoptions per month.”

To assist staff, community partners, youth and caregivers, DCFS has produced “A Guide To Permanency Options for Youth.” The guide is available on L.A. Kids or by contacting Chuck Willis at (562) 903-5159.

New Help with Adoption Recruitment

The Wendy's Wonderful Kids (WWK) initiative is a national program created through the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption. This innovative program funds full-time adoption recruiters from local private agencies to dedicate 100 percent of their time to finding families for waiting children. In Los Angeles County, the WWK grant has been awarded to the Kinship Center.

This is a valuable community resource that will assist in identifying adoptive families for older children for whom previous efforts have not proven successful.

"The best way to recruit on behalf of children is to

have the recruiter truly get to know them," explained DCFS Deputy Director Trish Ploehn.

The Kinship Center has been granted permission to work closely with children after they have been referred to WWK by the DCFS Placement and Recruitment Unit (PRU).

PRU will be the liaison for the social worker and WWK regarding the selection of a child for the program. Monthly recruitment reports will also be provided by the Kinship Center detailing their contacts with the children and the recruitment efforts made on their behalf. ■

ON THE LINE

Past Experiences Inspire Social Worker to Help Others

As a recent hire, Harmony Dust, a Family Maintenance and Reunification social worker in the Santa Clarita office, is facing the challenges of her new job. But it's Dust's past that helps her appreciate the life she has now and reach out to help other families and children in need.

Dust has worked for the department since July 2005 after finishing her master's degree in social work at UCLA. Now she has a caseload of 34, many involving ugly custody battles and sexual abuse.

"It's manageable now, but it was hard at first. I inherited some cases that were doosies," said Dust. "The challenge with my job is figuring out to what extent do I play the clinical role? I try to connect my clients with service providers who will meet their needs. You have to familiarize yourself with the services. I have always had enough services, the challenge is navigating them."

But Dust knows DCFS well. At age 17 she was in foster care in Los Angeles for a short time after surviving a history of sexual abuse and a rape at 14 years old. After the rape, Dust, who had always gotten good grades, began failing in school. She was kicked out of school and, finally, was placed in a group home after an altercation with her mom.

In those days, her therapist was a huge inspiration. "I was a wild kid, running the streets. I saw her for a year and she helped me see that I'm responsible for my actions. She inspired me."

The counselor in her group home was also inspiring. "It hit me that the sky's the limit."

During her senior year, Dust worked to improve her grades. But when she graduated from high school at 18, she began another downhill slide.

Dust moved in with a boyfriend who ended up being mentally and verbally abusive. At 19, she was \$35,000 in debt, supported him and saw no other way than stripping to earn money quickly.

"On the Line" is a "DCFS News" column featuring Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services social workers whose achievements and practices epitomize the best in social work.

She danced for three years in clubs near LAX, but now admits it gave her a "false feeling of power" over her sexuality.

As the relationship with her boyfriend became more abusive, Dust says her relationship with God grew and she "began to see my value."

"I showed up to work one night at the club and I just couldn't do it anymore – something had changed. That night, I told my employer I was leaving," she says.

Dust broke up with her boyfriend, got a job at a group home in South Los Angeles as a residential counselor and began working on her bachelor's degree in psychology. She says she knew she wanted to be part of the helping profession.

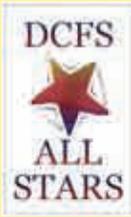
"I saw that social workers can make a big impact," she said. "I got inspired."

She met her husband and saw there are decent men and developed a sense of purpose. She also wanted to do more to reach out to the women who were in her previous situation so she started "Treasures" a non-profit organization with a corps of volunteers, many ex-dancers, who go to strip clubs in Los Angeles to educate dancers about alternatives in life. She said the owners oftentimes invite them in. Slowly, Dust has built a reputation with the clubs and now gets calls from women who've said they've stopped dancing because of her visit.

Dust now lives happily in North Hills with her husband of three years and is working on her clinical license and her non-profit organization.

"A healthy life is a byproduct of understanding your value and understanding your purpose." ■

Harmony Dust



Director's Employees of the Month

Every month, DCFS employees are honored as part of the "DCFS All Stars" employee recognition program. All of these employees are honored for enriching the lives of the children and families and contributing to our goals of permanence, safety and reduced reliance on out-of-home care. Recipients are chosen by a rotating panel of all levels of DCFS staff and given special certificates. Photos of all recipients are also mounted on the wall outside of the Director's office at DCFS Headquarters and posted on L.A. Kids. We're still looking for "DCFS All Stars" to honor and all staff are encouraged to send in nominations using the form on the L.A. Kids web site.

For more information, call Lois Shirk in the DCFS Office of Public Affairs at (213) 351-5886. To learn more about these outstanding recipients, check out the Director's Page on L.A. Kids. Congratulations to all of the honorees!

Outstanding Administrative Service Staff Award

January: No Nominees
February: Dorothy Mitchell, ASM I, Contracts
March: No Nominees
April: Harvey Kawasaki, RA, Torrance

Outstanding Direct Service Staff Award

January: Dominga Alegria-Flores, CSW III, Pomona
February: Phineas Gray, CSW III, Wateridge
March: Susan Snyder, CSW III, WLA
April: Tracy Groendyke, SCSW, Lakewood

Outstanding Support Service Staff Award

January: No Nominees
February: Marilyn Orzek, ITC, North Hollywood
March: Andrea M. Jones, Sec. III, Century
April: Amelia Rutledge, TA, Santa Fe Springs

Team Award

January: No Nominees
February: Karla Vasquez, CSW II, Vilma Hernandez, CSW II, North Hollywood
March: Juan Chavez, IC, John Casados, IC, Glendora
April: No Nominees

UPCOMING EVENTS

COUNTY DAY AT THE FAIR
Sunday, September 10, 2006
Gates open at 10 a.m.
Fairplex in Pomona
Information: (213) 974-1363
County employees will receive special admission prices at the L.A. County Fair.

LATINO ADOPTION FIESTA
Saturday, September 16, 2006
11 a.m.
Loma Alta Park, Altadena
Information: (626) 229-3779
A relaxing and fun time for approved adoption applicants to meet and interact with Latino children who are available for adoption.

"RISING STARS" BENEFIT
Saturday, October 28, 2006
6 p.m.
Norris Center for the Performing Arts, Palos Verdes
Information: (310) 373-0888
The evening's event raises scholarship funds which will provide a brighter future for hundreds of L.A. County foster youth. Dinner, entertainment and auction.

NATIONAL ADOPTION SATURDAY
Saturday, November 18, 2006
8:30 a.m.
Edmund D. Edelman Children's Court, Monterey Park
Information: (310) 972-3120
Courts around the country along with Edelman's Children's Court will open their doors to finalize hundreds of adoptions and celebrate the adoptive families.

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www.dcfcs.co.la.ca.us
www.lacounty.info

Child Protection Hotline
1-800-540-4000
Adoptions and Foster Care Information
1-888-811-1121

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